

III. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

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General Historical Overview

1630-1730+/-: Exploration and Frontier Settlement

Spanish and Italian sailors discovered the Mid-Atlantic region in the sixteenth century, using the Delaware Bay as a landmark for ships traveling back from the Caribbean; however, Henry Hudson, who was exploring the region for Holland in 1609, was the first to claim it for a European nation, in hopes that it would prove to be the elusive Northwest Passage to Asia. As a result of Hudson's explorations, the Dutch laid claim to the land from the Delaware Bay to New York, calling it New Netherlands.⁴ In the spring of 1610, the English rediscovered the river. Captain Samuel Argall, blown off course while sailing from Jamestown to Bermuda, explored and claimed all of the coastland between Cape Cod and Virginia for England. Called St. Christopher's Bay by the Spanish, and the *Zuidt*, or South River, by Hudson, it was Argall who gave Delaware its English name, after Lord Del la Ware, the proprietor of Jamestown.⁵

The first settlements in Delaware were temporary landings established by Dutch corporations.⁶ Initially using the Mid-Atlantic as a base to attack Spanish galleons, Dutch privateers turned to the lucrative fur trade after Holland opened peace negotiations with Spain. They built trading posts at Fort Nassau near present-day Gloucester, New Jersey in 1623, New Amsterdam (now New York) in 1626, and a short-lived whaling colony, Zwaanendael (now Lewes, DE), in 1629. Sweden began permanent settlement of Delaware slightly later, after being granted permission to deport their surplus immigrant population to unoccupied portions of New Netherlands. In 1638, two ships, the *Kalmar Nyckel* (Key of Kalmar) and the *Vogel Grip* (Griffin) landed at present-day Wilmington carrying mostly Finns. Reinforcements arrived in 1640 and 1643, and New Sweden tentatively expanded along the west side of the Delaware River.⁷

Holland and Sweden struggled for hegemony and survival in the New World over the next two decades. Plagued by disease, warfare, and a lack of willing colonists, neither was able to develop thriving settlements and both succumbed to an invasion by England in 1664. New Amsterdam surrendered to the British on September 8 and New Amstel on September 30, extending British dominion over the entire Eastern Seaboard, as claimed by Argall. The Dutch briefly regained portions of New Netherlands in 1673 but were defeated by Lord Baltimore, Governor of Maryland, within a year. English sovereignty endured for the next 100 years.

Delaware was considerably more successful under British rule. Colonization increased dramatically and permanent, successful settlements began moving inland along major tributary streams. The emphasis on hunting and trapping shifted to an agricultural-based economy and tightly clustered communities expanded out into scattered farms. New Castle County was subdivided into the Brandywine, Christiana, New Castle, St. George's, and Appoquinimink hundreds in 1687. The Pencader, Red Lion, Mill Creek, and White Clay Creek hundreds were added in 1710. The Brandywine Valley developed in the 1730s when a group of Quaker families migrated from Ridley, Pennsylvania to build a milling and trading center serving the farms of southern Pennsylvania. Wilmington, located at the junction of the Brandywine and Delaware Rivers was founded by Thomas Willing in 1731. Farms in Chester county transported their grain overland to Wilmington mills for processing and then on by water to Philadelphia.

⁴ Dan Terrell, *Eight Flags over Delaware 1609-1715* (Lewes Beach, DE: Duck Press, 1975), p. i.

⁵ Terrell, ii.

⁶ Pennock Pusey, *History of Lewes, DE*. (Wilmington, DE: Historical Society of Delaware, 1903), pp. 5-8.

⁷ *State of Delaware Webpage*, available at <http://www.state.de.us>.

1770-1830+/-: Early Industrialization

The Lower Counties eventually became the State of Delaware on June 15, 1776, using the Declaration of Independence to secede from both England and Pennsylvania. Remaining a strong supporter of the new nation, Delaware went on to become the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution on December 7, 1787, earning it the moniker “The First State.”⁸ Also at that time, the capital moved from New Castle to the more centrally located Dover⁹; however, Wilmington remained the highest population center and later became Delaware’s only industrial city.

Delaware’s economy was stimulated by the embargos preceding the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Political conflicts in the early nineteenth century greatly diminished the supply of European manufactured goods to America, and many of Delaware’s milling industries date from that period, including the Eleutherian Mills at Hagley. As dependence on the Brandywine mills dropped considerably once railroads provided direct access to Philadelphia, Wilmington became an industrial center manufacturing railroad cars, carriages, and iron ships with a large leather processing industry.¹⁰ During the Civil War, Wilmington was the center of Delaware’s pro-Union war effort, manufacturing steam ships, wagons, shoes, ammunition containers, and holsters for the north. The army also had a field hospital in Wilmington and a Prisoner of War camp at Fort Delaware on Pea Patch.¹¹

Historically, most of Delaware’s manufacturers and farmers transported their products by water. Many Delaware rivers have access to the Atlantic Ocean, including the Christiana, Mispillion, Broadkill, Saint Jones and Murderkill. With such an abundance of navigable rivers, most of Delaware’s roads were poor-quality and provided only local access.¹² Faulkland Road, for example, was a short country highway connecting Wilmington and Faulkland Station.

Overland travel was slightly improved with the invention of turnpikes. Turnpikes were paved toll roads built, usually by non-local investors, for the transportation of goods along overland routes where these routes were competitive in price or travel time with waterborne transportation. The Newport and Gap, Delaware’s first turnpike and first road to be improved with crushed stone, was completed in 1808.¹³ Built over an old Indian trail, it connected Newport in southern New Castle County with Christiana, Pennsylvania.¹⁴ The Lancaster Turnpike was completed shortly thereafter, connecting the farms of Lancaster, Pennsylvania with Wilmington via Hockessin.¹⁵ Centre/Ferris Road was part of a succession of secondary north-south roads connecting the Newport and Gap Turnpike, the Lancaster Turnpike, and other major east-west thoroughfares. Route 141 today connects New Castle with Ardentown.

Land bordering the corridors between population nodes, such as state and county highways, was occupied by large-acre agricultural parcels or country estates. These areas remained sparsely developed until the late nineteenth century, until they became accessible via the railroad, trolley, and later via the automobile.¹⁶ Some of the original names of these estates exist into the present, including Woodland Apartments and Woodland Heights, located on the former site of the 100-acre “Woodland” estate

⁸ Dr. Carol E. Hoffecker, *Delaware: The First State*, (Wilmington, DE: Middle Atlantic Press), 1988, p. 98.

⁹ Hoffecker, *Delaware*, 86.

¹⁰ Dr. Carol E. Hoffecker, *Readings in Delaware History*, (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press), 1973, pp. 158-172.

¹¹ Hoffecker, *Delaware*, pp. 140-147.

¹² George Rogers Taylor, “The Transportation Revolution: 1815-60” in *The Economic History of the United States, Volume IV*, (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1951), p. 16.

¹³ Henry G. Alsberg, ed., *Delaware: A Guide to the First State*, (New York, NY: Hastings House), 1936, pp. 445-6.

¹⁴ C.A. Weslager. *Delaware’s Buried Past* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), p. 144

¹⁵ Thomas J. Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1609-1988*, Volume 1 (Philadelphia, PA: L.J. Richards), 1888, p. 417.

¹⁶ Herman and Siders, pp. 93-96.

bordering Ferris Road (**Figure 2**).¹⁷

1880-1940+/-: Early Urbanization and Early Suburbanization

The largely rural atmosphere, relatively near major roadways and Wilmington, provided a suitable home for a new institution in Delaware. Currently known as the Ferris State Youth and Family Center, at the home of the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, the facility is the oldest vocational training school for delinquent minors in Delaware. The institution was founded in 1885 via the bequest of John Ferris, who designated funds in his will “for the benefit of any of the necessary portion of the human family that may come to his knowledge.”¹⁸ The executor of Ferris’ estate, his cousin Caleb Harlan, began the ‘Ferris Reform School’ as a “House of Refuge” for white and African American boys. The name was changed to the Ferris Industrial School in 1889,¹⁹ and it became a state institution in 1919.²⁰ The school is located on the former county seat of Philip Quigley, called “Woodside.” The original manor house was reused as a school and is still incorporated within the campus. The property also currently houses as a seventy-two (72) bed, maximum-security care facility maintained by Delaware Youth Rehabilitative Services.²¹

Suburban development surrounding Wilmington became possible due to the expansion of the trolley system, allowing workers to live much farther distances from their places of employment. Horse-drawn and later electric trolleys had served inner city Wilmington since 1860, beginning with the Wilmington City Railway Company and later joined by its competitor, the Peoples Railway Company (PRC), in the 1890s. The first suburban line was built by the PRC in 1891 to Elsmere, an industrial hub and the subsequent junction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Wilmington and Northern Railroads (**Figure 3**). Small lots were made available along Ohio, Western, Northern, Wilmington and Baltimore Avenues for \$200, with a deed restriction that all houses had to have a value of \$1,000 or more. The model was an immediate success among Wilmington’s working-class population. Forty-nine (49) additional subdevelopments were created on the outskirts of Wilmington by 1920. Between 1920 and 1950, the population of the Brandywine and Christiana Hundreds grew faster than in any other hundreds in the county. Thirty-seven (37) subdevelopments were built in the Christiana Hundred alone between those years.²²

Subdivision developments first grew along trolley lines, then along major automobile routes. The Roselle Franklin Property and other nearby subdivisions were initiated in proximity to trolley lines, while other developments in the current project area occurred later and were located along thoroughfares in areas between historic turnpikes (**Figure 4**). These developments include Willow Run I, Willow Run II, Woodland Heights, Woodland Apartments and Brookland Terrace (**Figure 5**). Brookland Terrace and the William Frederick Property featured streets in a grid pattern, and architectural styles such as Cape Cod, Bungalow and Colonial Revival. The later subdivisions, dating from the 1950s, exhibit front and side gable cottages, Colonial Revival, and even some International Style elements.

¹⁷ G.M. Hopkins & Co., Map of New Castle County, DE, (Philadelphia, PA: G.M. Hopkins & Co.), 1881.

¹⁸ State of Delaware. “Agency History: Ferris School/ Youth Services Commission of Delaware.” Available at www.state.de.us/sos/dpa/collections/aghist/1501-003.shtml.

¹⁹ H. Clay Reed. *Delaware: A History of the First State*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc, 1947), pp. 832-33.

²⁰ Walter A. Powell. *A History of Delaware*. (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1928), p. 422.

²¹ “Ferris School,” http://www.state.de.us/kids/yrs_ferris.htm

²² Chase, et. al., pp. 135-137.

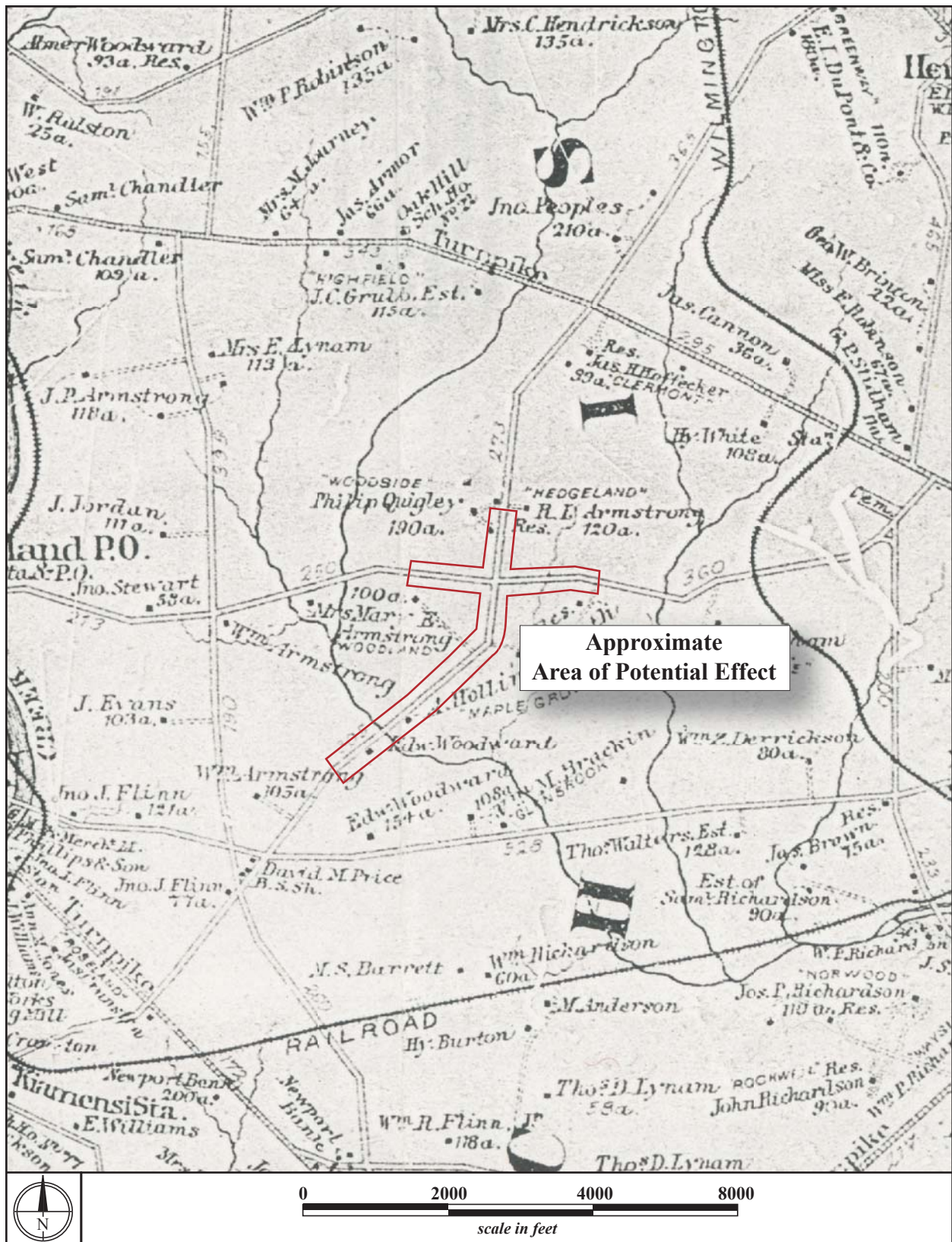


Figure 2. G.M. Hopkins & Co. Map of New Castle County, DE. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins & Co. 1881.

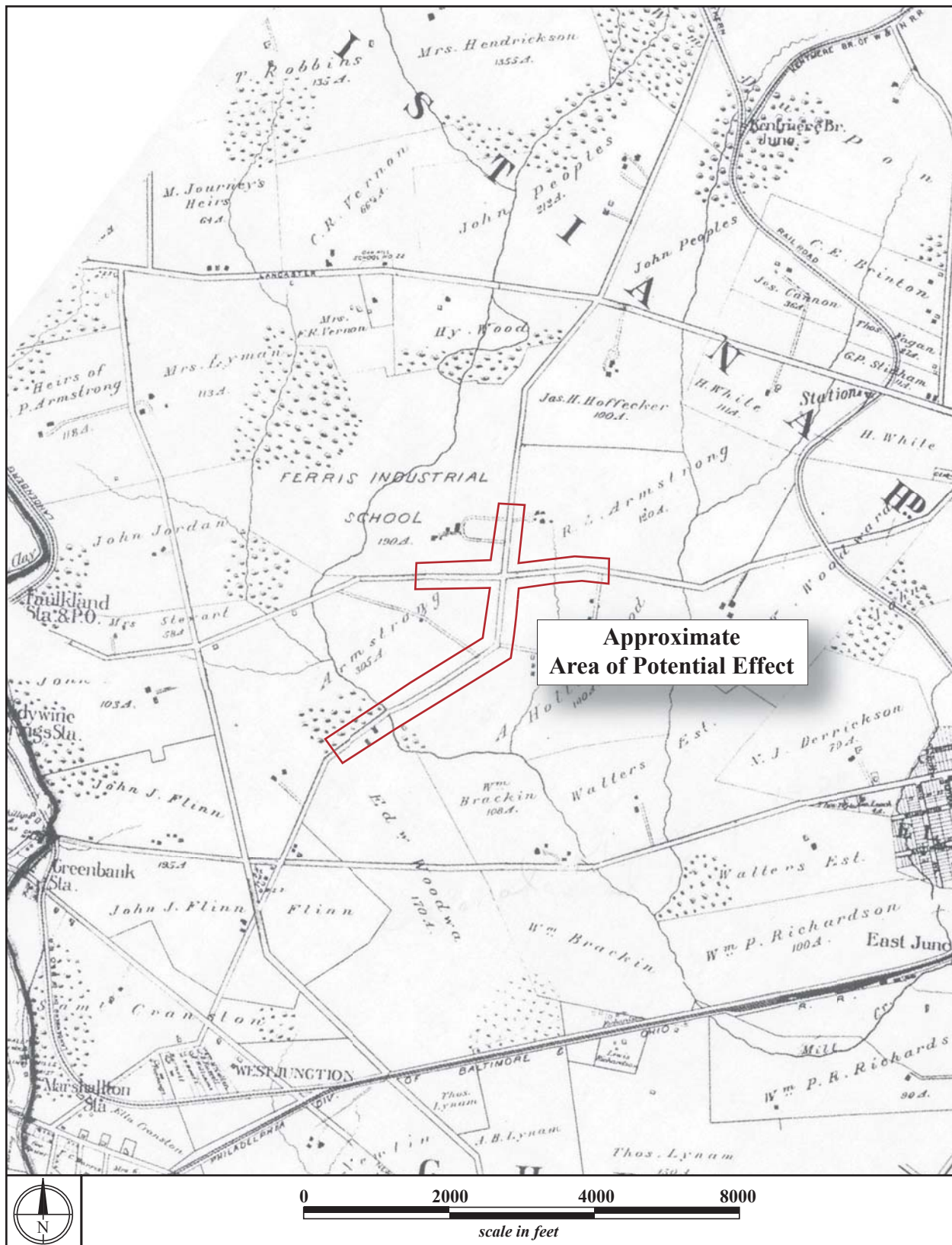


Figure 3. W.G. Baist. *Atlas of New Castle County*. Philadelphia, PA: W.G. Baist, 1893.

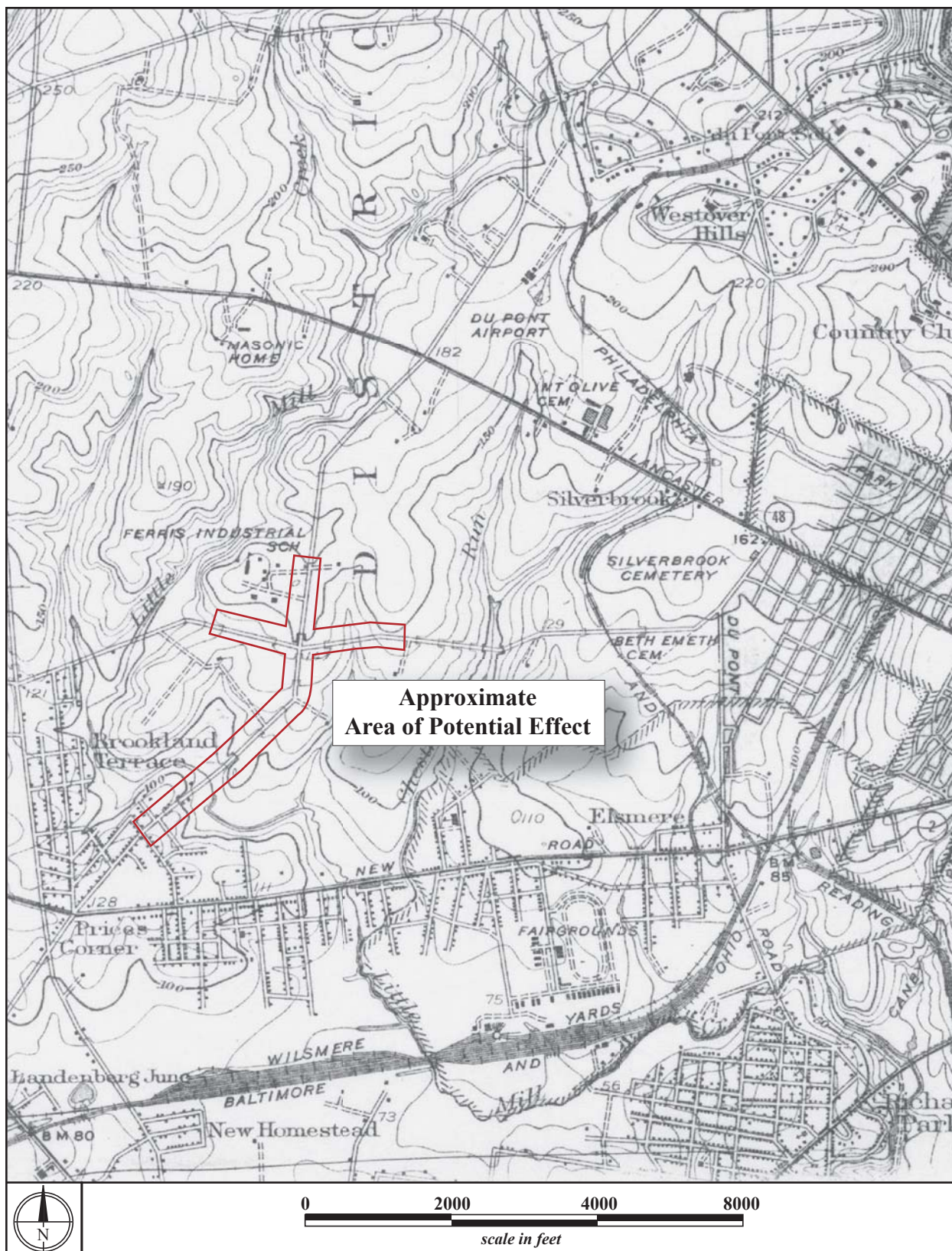


Figure 4. United States Geological Survey, Topographic Series, *Wilmington and Vicinity, DE*, 1942; surveyed 1935-36.

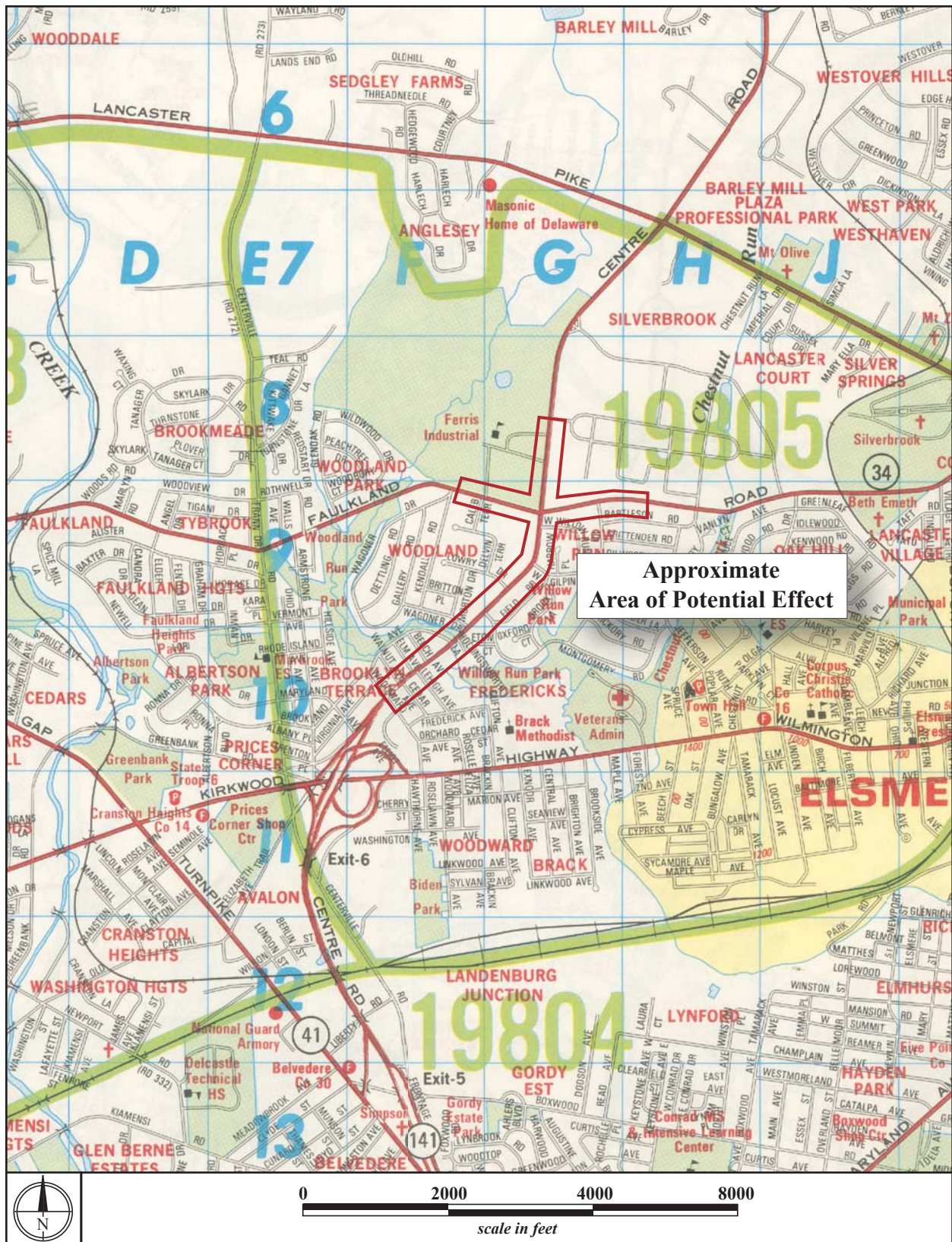


Figure 5. ADC, New Castle County, Delaware Street Map, 1984.

According to deed record D-29-605, the original Brookland Terrace subdevelopment was platted in 1920 immediately north of the trolley line along Kirkwood Highway. The development encompassed 241.4 acres of land between Faulkland Road and Kirkwood Highway and between Ferris Road and Centerville Road and included the present day communities of Woodland Heights, Davis Terrace, and Brookland Terrace. Lots were platted on a grid with straight streets, multiple access roads, and regular lot sizes measuring 20 feet of frontage by 100 feet deep. The development grew irregularly out from three pockets along Ferris (SR 141) and Centerville roads between 1930 and the early 1950s. House lots varied in size, combining between two and six original parcels. The greatest concentration of construction occurred in the 1930s.

The 25-acre William Frederick Property subdivision, located along the east side of SR 141 immediately opposite Brookland Terrace, was platted in 1931 and developed into the 1950s. Lot sizes included 25 feet of frontage and either 100 or 125 feet of depth. Although by that time the widespread use of the automobile was leading to progressively more park-like subdevelopments with curved streets, limited access, and a growing use of cul-de-sacs, the Frederick landscape design reflects the earlier gridded plats.

Architecturally, these Wilmington suburbs developed concurrently with national trends toward smaller houses with simpler designs. The majority of Brookland Terrace's building stock dates from the 1930s and was built in the popular bungalow style. Dwellings included Craftsman, Cape Cod, side- and front-gable cottage sub-styles, with some Colonial Revival-style dwellings. The contemporary Frederick development includes a similar mix of styles with a greater emphasis on Colonial Revival-style houses.

Willow Run I and II, located between the Frederick development and Faulkland Road, represent the later phase of Wilmington suburban development, which fully utilizes the curvilinear street design. It also represents changes in real estate development, which merged the builder and developer resulting in minimal architectural variety. Willow Run I is located along the south side of Faulkland Road between Centre Road (SR 141) and Montgomery Road. The development was designed with curved roads and limited access points. Lot sizes were uniform, measuring 65 feet of frontage by 100 feet deep. Willow Run I was platted in 1946 and built between 1948-1955 by Gilpin, Van Trump and Montgomery, Inc. The dwellings represent two Minimal Traditional footprints: the one-story, front-gable design, and the one and one-half story side-gable design. The existing development is representative of the original designed landscape; however, the majority of houses were renovated in the late twentieth century and no longer retain integrity of materials.

Willow Run II, located immediately east of Willow Run I, was built by the same development company using a similar plan and lot size; however, the housing stock consisted of a slightly more modern side-gable Minimal Traditional style and utilized only one footprint. In 1996, A.G. Liechtenstein and Associates, Inc. found this development to be eligible for inclusion in the NR for its integrity of design and "high concentration of identical, simple one-story side-gabled dwellings, which are representative of architectural trends during this time."²³

The Woodland subdivisions, Woodland Apartments and Woodland Heights, were developed in the 1950s. While Woodland Apartments exhibits the transition from Colonial Revival to International Style in its circa 1952 apartment buildings, the Woodland Heights area, also known as the Woodland subdivision, embraces the split-level house design that was increasing in popularity at the time. The dwellings of Woodland Heights were constructed circa 1955.

²³ Eric Griffiths. *Architectural Resource Survey: State Route 141 (Centre Road), Kirkwood Highway to Faulkland Road*. Prepared for the Delaware Department of Transportation. (East Orange, New Jersey: Louis Berger Group, Inc., 2001), p. 33.

The Final Plat Block Map for Woodland Apartments indicates that Route 141 accommodated four lanes of traffic in 1952 from Montgomery Road northward. Delaware Department of Transportation plans for Centre Road from Boxwood Road to Lancaster Pike show the widening of Centre Road (Route 141) from Montgomery Road southward to four lanes.²⁴ Service drives for Woodland Apartments and Willow Run I, on the west and east sides of Route 141 respectively, were separated from the roadway with curbs and grassy medians.

Industry followed the population out of the City of Wilmington. The 120-acre former “Hedgeland” estate, located at the northeastern corner of SR 141 and Faulkland Road, was purchased for the duPont Company’s Barley Mills complex in 1958. Buildings from the estate, accessed from SR 141 directly across from the Ferris Reform School, appear to have stood through at least the early 1940s (**Figures 2-4**). Construction began on buildings associated with the duPont complex in the early 1960s.²⁵ This complex, now referred to as Chestnut Run, has become a major research and development facility for the duPont Company. Additional manufacturing and other commercial/business interests moved to nearby Newark, Newport, and other locations in the surrounding area. Following these developments, the conversion of suburban Wilmington to independent communities was complete. No longer dependent upon the city for employment, goods and services, the residents of Wilmington’s suburbs could live, work, and play without ever needing to go into Wilmington.

Currently, the project area is mostly made up of the residential subdivisions described above. Small commercial interests are located at West Gilpin Drive and Faulkland Road, including small stores, restaurants, and a gas station.

Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan

The Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan defines four geographic zones in the state; this project area is located in the Piedmont zone, near the boundary between the Piedmont zone and the Upper Peninsula zone. Given historic map information and background research, it was assumed that properties in the APE would date to the period of Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880-1940+/- and Industrialization and Early Urbanization 1830-1880+/- . In addition, it was assumed that the significance of properties would fall within the themes of Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts and Settlement Patterns & Demographic Change.

²⁴ Meyer Richardson Associates, Consulting Engineers, “Woodland Apartments, Final Plat Block Map, Street & Road Plan #9, Section 1,” December 10, 1952; State Highway Department, *Construction of Contract No. 1300, Centre Road - Boxwood Road to Lancaster Pike*, March 30, 1954, Revised October 22, 1954.

²⁵ New Castle County Deeds, Parcel #0703240001, p. 61-1. Available on New Castle County’s website, at www.co.new-castle.de.us. Accessed August 26, 2005; Mapco, “Map of Greater Wilmington, Delaware,” (Map Corporation of America: Boston), 1960.